

Officials and weatherman optimistic

Cold key to Winterlude success

By Paula McLaughlin
Journal Reporter

The January thaw was the clear winner in round one, but officials of the Winterlude festival vowed Tuesday they'll hold their own in the rest of the match on the canal, Feb. 2 to 11.

Rheal Leroux, activities co-ordinator for the National Capital Commission, said the mild temperatures and rain of the past five days wreaked havoc with the canal's ice surface, turning it into a slushy mess.

The canal has been closed to the public and the surface has been so soft that workers haven't been able to groom it. The world's longest skating rink won't be ready to re-open until Thursday night or Friday.

But Leroux said the weatherman "has promised us cold, cold and more cold for the next 10 days, so we'll be in great shape."

About \$150,000 has been earmarked for the 10-day Winterlude and because the bulk of the events will take place on the canal the festival's success "is dependent on the

weather being cold enough to allow workmen to keep the surface open.

So, if the weatherman co-operates, Winterlude '79 will get under way Friday with a full 15-page program.

Friday's events feature a torchlight parade, public sleigh rides and a disco at the Dows Lake Boathouse.

On the weekend, The Great Bed Race and Andre Gagnon in concert at the National Arts Centre lead the list of events on Saturday.

And to mark the 100th anniversary of Canadian harness racing, the Canadian Trotting Association has sanctioned eight races on the canal at Fifth Avenue. The races, featuring some of the best reinsmen in the country, offer \$4,000 in purses.

Throughout the duration of Winterlude, there will be tin can curling at Dows Lake, home-made beans at the National Arts Centre cafe and Dows Lake Boathouse and sleigh rides sponsored by the National Capital Equestrian Park at Dows Lake, Fifth

Avenue and the Conference Centre.

Groups wishing to book sleigh rides, bean suppers or tin can curling should call 996-5784.

During Winterlude, each day's activities will be available in English and French by calling 232-1234.

NCC snow slides will be operating every day at the arts centre and Ice Dream, the collection of amateur and professional ice sculptures, will be on display at Dows Lake.

On the canal near the Pretoria Bridge the young folk will be entertained by a labyrinth, and two icy characters called Yok and Octopus.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in canal "happenings" and several radio stations will host live programs from the ice surface throughout the 10 days.

Leroux said Winterlude should become an annual event, paralleling the attraction of festivities such as the Quebec Winter Carnival.